

26 February 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

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SUBJECT: Book Review: Masters of Deceit. The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It
by J. Edgar Hoover, Director Federal Bureau
of Investigation
New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1958

(366 pp., including a glossary of Communist terms and a bibliography of major Communist 'classics,' plus historical and biographical chronologies.)

1. Mr. Hoover's thesis seems to be that: "The present menace of the Communist Party in the United States grows in direct ratio to the rising feeling that it is a small, dissident element and need not be feared. As we relax our protection and ease up on security measures, we move closer and closer to a 'fool's paradise.'" (p. 78)

2. The author attempts to alert the country to the Communist menace by explaining: (a) the history of communism in general and of the US Communist Party; in particular (b) the nature of the communist appeal in the US and the reasons why people join and leave the Party; and (c) the nature of communist party organization and discipline, communist strategy and tactics in the US, and the communist underground.


3. The author says in his Foreword, "I have sought to avoid sensationalism, even though much of the FBI's work in keeping abreast of day-to-day activities of American communists makes us ask in wonderment: 'Can this be possible?'" The tone of the book is consistent with this statement. It relies largely on actual case histories, presumably taken from FBI files.

4. Hoover advises the average citizen (p. 310) that "The FBI cannot do it alone" and that each American can help by giving the FBI

any information that might be helpful against the communist movement (specified in detail pp. 311-312)--stressing, however, that this should not include ignorant or malicious attacks on the innocent.

5. Although the Central Intelligence Agency is nowhere mentioned directly or indirectly in the book, Chapter 21 on "Espionage and Sabotage" (pp. 291-307) contains matters of possible interest as follows: a brief history of Soviet espionage and sabotage in the US (pp. 291-296 and 303-307); an observation (p. 295) that Elizabeth Bentley, according to her testimony, collected Party dues from "Officials of the Office of Strategic Services"; an account of the FBI's surveillance of Yuri Novikov in 1951 (pp. 296-298); comments on the Ponger-Verber case (p. 298); the nature of the Soviet espionage organization in the US, including methods of recruiting agents and comments on the Ivanovich Abel and Harry Gold cases (pp. 299-301); and a list of six Soviet espionage targets in the US which includes as No. 3, "The intelligence and counterintelligence agencies of the United States, possibilities for penetration" (p. 302).

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